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Factors influencing children's schooling in rural communities of South West Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Education is important to national development spanning all indices of and precursor of socioeconomic transformation, technologies development, welfare attainment, health and peaceful co-existence in communities. It leads to the culmination of facts, experience and thoughts that is gained over a life time. This informs the aphorism that a nation cannot develop beyond the level of education of the citizenry. Schooling is an organised process of teaching and learning which takes place in formal setting. Children are expected to be exposed to schooling as the primary focus of their engagements. Parents ordinarily take education of their children as important unless there are serious issues that bar them from its achievement. In developed economies almost all children of school age attend schools, whether in urban or rural areas. The experiences in developing nation, particularly in rural areas, are contrary to this, which has been attributed to dearth of infrastructural facilities, indigence and low socioeconomic status.

Keywords: Education; communal development; children's schooling

INTRODUCTION

An important national development indicator is the Human Development Index (HDI), which has children education as a critical criterion. Norway is the leading country in this regard while Nigeria's performance is among the lowest (UNDP, 2019). Primary schools children's enrolment in Nigeria is 39.4 percent, according to Multiple Indication Cluster Survey (MICS) of 2016 and 2017 (NBS/UNICEF, 2018). Nigerian government introduced the national school feeding programme to encourage completion of school at the basic level in order to address the low level of basic school enrolment in the country. The programme is expected to address some aspects of the factors that affect school enrolment; as the strategy may be seen as incentive from the perspectives of the parents as well as the children.

Literature is replete with facts about the essence of education at the rural areas in developing countries like Nigeria. The focus is to ascertain the values attached to education. This value attachment to education is an indication of their propensity to see education as a conduit to individual and communal development. Education has the potential to build capacity and knowledge in the rural populace, helping them to make informed decisions about their livelihood activities and to innovate in agricultural matters. Subrahmanian (2002) pointed

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out that there are important non-market component to the demand for education in rural areas. Education can lead to positive outcomes like ability to understand policies, procedures, rights, duties, government schemes/programmes, legislation, available benefits and protection laws. These non-market components manifest in individuals' attitude i.e. their characteristics and outlook to life.

There are substantial challenges to children education in Nigerian rural communities. The situation is exacerbated by the households' poverty condition, inaccessibility to school, deplorable condition of school facilities, cultural impediments to schooling and teachers' lethargy. The challenge is manifested with the fact that there are 13.2 million out-of-school children in Nigeria out of the 262 million worldwide (Educeleb, 2018). These constitute the children who were not enrolled in schools at all or did not complete primary school education. Many authorities agreed that rural household heads' low socioeconomic status also affect children's school enrolment, attendance, retention and completion of the engagement (Zhao and Glewwe, 2010; Cardoso and Verner, 2007).

In order to place this important matter in perspective, the matters that concern enrolment of school children has to be properly understood in Nigeria, especially in the rural areas; it therefore imperative to probe the factors that affect children's schooling in rural areas of Southwest Nigeria. This study therefore put forth the following research questions as pertinent;

1. What are the characteristics of the respondents in the study area?
2. In what activities were the children engaged in the study area?
3. What factors influence children's schooling in the study area?

METHODOLOGY

Study area

The study area is the South-west geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The zone lies within the latitude 6^0N and 9^0N of the equator and longitudes 2^03^1 E and 6^0 E of the Greenwich meridian. It is comprised of 6 Yoruba speaking states namely Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo and Ekiti states, with a population of 27,581,982 people of which, 28.8% are children between the ages of 5 and 14 years old (Nigeria – planet, 2007).

The population of the study were all rural household heads and children (between 5 and 14 years of age) of the households. Multistage sampling procedure was used to select the respondents from the rural households. The first step was random sampling of 50% of the 6 states in the geopolitical zone, which gave Ondo, Ogun and Oyo states. Then was stratification and selection of Local Government Areas (LGAs) with rural communities and random sampling of 10% of wards in the selected LGAs. Then there was a sampling of 10% of the rural communities in the selected wards; and random sampling of 10% of households from each of the selected communities. Thereafter, there was purposive sampling of the household head and random sampling of a child among the children (aged between 5 and 14 years) in each of the selected households. The procedure led to the selection of 210 household heads and 210 children in the households as respondents for the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of the study's respondents

Children's characteristics

Results in Table 1 shows that more (51.9%) of the children were boys while 48.1% of them were girls. This suggests that there are more boys, for the purpose extra-curricular activities, in the rural areas. This finding is in agreement with that of Adekunle *et al* (2007) that more of the sampled rural children who participate in farming were boys in Patigi Local Government Area of Kwara State.

The results also shows that the age distribution of the children reveals that 30.9% were between 9 and 10 years, 28.57% were between 13 and 14 years while 21.9% of them were between 11 and 12 years of age. The mean age was 10.8 years implied that the children population is fairly young. The finding is in concordance with that of Adekunle *et al*. (2007) who got 10.2 years as the mean age of children in rural community of Patigi Local Government Area of Kwara State.

The result also shows that 64.8% of the children were in primary schools, 25.7% of them were in secondary schools while only 9.5% were not in any school. This suggests that more most of them were in primary school, which may be explained by the fact that the average age of the sample is that which should still be in primary school in the study area.

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Table 1: Distribution of the children's characteristics

Characteristics	Freq	Percentage	Mean	SD
Sex:				
Male	109	51.9		
Female	101	48.1		
Age (in years):				
5-6	7	3.33	10.8	0.501
7-8	32	15.24		
9-10	65	30.96		
11-12	46	21.9		
13-14	60	28.57		
Level of education attained				
None	20	9.5		
Primary	136	64.8		
Secondary school	54	25.7		

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Parents' characteristics

Sex – Result in Table 2 shows that 51.4% of the households' heads in the study area were male. This implies that there are more male headed households in the study area. This finding is in congruence with that of Fasina 2007; Adepoju and Obayelu, 2013; NBS, 2012 with reports that majority of the households in Southwest Nigeria were male headed.

Age – The age distribution of the household heads in the study area reveals that most (74.9%) of them were within the age bracket of 23 and 55 years while 25.2% were older than 55 years. With the mean age at 47.3 years, it shows that majority of them were in their active ages. This finding is in line with that of Babatunde *et al.* (2007) who reported 50 years as mean age for rural farmers in Kwara State of Nigeria and Fasoranti (2010) who reported the mean age of 48 years for rural household heads in rural areas of Ekiti state.

Education – Result in Table 2 shows that 40% of the household heads did not have any formal education 33.4% of them had primary (spent between 1 and 6 years) schools, 21.4% of them had secondary (spent between 7 and 12 years in schools). The mean number of years of education was 5.19. This finding implied that most of the household heads were not substantially educated. The finding is in line with that of Olawuyi and Adetunji (2013) who reported that only 36.7% of rural household heads had primary education.

Number of children – The result shown in Table 2, shows that 68.1% of the respondents had between 1 and 5 children, while the mean number of children was 4.5. The result suggests a fairly small number in comparison to what is known in rural areas. This finding is in line with that of Ajani (2005) and Fasina (2007) who reported a mean of 5 children for farming households in rural areas in south west Nigeria.

Primary occupation of household heads - The results in Table 2 reveal that 48.1% of the respondents are engaged in farming as primary occupation. This is understandable for inhabitants of rural areas, even if they engage in other income generating activities. This finding is consistent with those of Fasina (2007) and Adepoju and Obayelu (2013) that appreciable proportion of household heads have farming as their major occupation in Southwest Nigeria.

Monthly income of households' heads - The household monthly income of the households' heads as shown in Table 2 indicated that 33.81% of them earned ₦10,000 and below per month as income, 31.90% earned between ₦10,000 and ₦20,000 while 14.29% earned between ₦20,000 and ₦30,000 monthly. The mean monthly income of the households' heads was ₦33,674.10 ($93.54), which implies that an average household head in the study area is a low income earner. This is in line with the finding of Fasina (2007) who reported a mean monthly income of ₦37,702.41 for rural household heads in south western region of Nigeria.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to the socioeconomic characteristics

Variable	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std deviation
Sex				
Male	108	51.4		
Female	102	48.6		

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Age (in years)			47.3	10.96
23-33	18	8.6		
34-44	63	30		
45-55	76	36.2		
56-66	38	18.1		
67-77	15	7.1		
Years of formal Education			5.19	5.09
None	84	40.0		
1-6	70	33.4		
7-12	45	21.4		
> 12	11	5.2		
Other/Informal Education				
None	168	80.0		
Adult	1	0.5		
Quranic/Arabic	16	7.6		
Vocational	25	11.9		
Primary Occupation				
Civil Service	3	1.4		
Business	33	15.7		
Artisan	27	12.9		
Trading	43	20.5		
Farming	101	48.1		
Agro-Processing	3	1.4		
No of children			4.5	
1-5	143	68.1		
6 –10	62	29.5		
> 10	05	2.4		
Monthly Income			33,674.1	91023.22
10,000 and below	71	33.81		
10,001 to 20,000	67	31.90		
20,001 to 30,000	30	14.29		
30,001 to 40,000	16	7.62		
40,001 to 50,000	13	6.19		
50,001 to 60,000	10	4.76		
Above 60,000	3	1.43		

Children's engagements

Results in Table 3 show the combination of activities which the children were preoccupied with. It was revealed that 55.24% of the children were engaged in schooling alone, while those schooling and working were 27.14%. This suggests that despite the fact that the children were engaged in other activities such as apprenticeship and working, education was still given some attention in the study area. This finding is in congruence with the result of General Household Survey Panel in Nigeria by NBS (2012) study which put the enrolment of children aged 5-14 years in the South-West Nigeria at 90.7% for both public and private schools; in fact, the highest among all the other regions in the country.

Table 3: Distribution of the children according to their engagements

Activities	Frequency	Percentage
Schooling alone	116	55.2
Working alone	18	8.6
Apprenticeship alone	7	3.3
Schooling and working	57	27.1

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Apprenticeship and Schooling	11	5.3
None	1	0.5

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Educational engagement of the rural children

In a further probe of the educational engagement of the children in rural areas, results in Table 4 shows that 84.8% of the children were enrolled in schools out of which 15.2% dropped out of schools. Out of those who dropped out of schools, the result revealed that 13.3% of them dropped out in primary schools while 1.9% dropped out in junior secondary schools. The result shows that despite the impressive school enrolment, substantial proportion (44.8%) of the children still engage in other activities that may hinder their educational achievements and 15.2% still dropped out of the educational engagement entirely. This implies that the educational engagement of the children in the study area is not optimal. This finding is an important matter that needed to be critically pursued for a pragmatic solution to stem the trend.

Table 4: Distribution of the children according to Educational Engagement

School enrolment	Frequency	Percentage
School attendance	178	84.8
School dropout	32	15.2
Point of dropping out;		
Primary school	28	13.3
Junior secondary school	4	1.9
No stoppage	178	84.8

Factors influencing children's schooling

The study carried out a regression analysis to identify the factors that influence children's engagement in schooling. The result in Table 5 shows that the child's age (β=-0.237), being a male child (β=-0.139) and school availability (β=0.198) significantly influenced school attendance in the study area. Other variables in the OLS regression, that do not significantly influence children schooling are parents' education, household size, monthly income, monogamy marriage, parents' age, school distance and male household head. The results suggest that older children are less likely to be in school i.e. as they grow older they would be engaged in other activities other than education, even if they are of school age. A report from ILO (undated) stated that chances of children facing hazardous work increase for older children between 15 and 17 years. This situation is based on the wrong perception of the children's parents that physical capacity is all that a child requires to join the labour force; thereby relegating the intellectual capacity that should have been acquired at the school.

The results also suggest that a male child is less likely to be in school than a female child; as male children are more likely to be engaged in other activities that take them away from education. According to ILO (2011), on average, boys make up 63% and girls 37% of child labour in agriculture in the age group 5-17 years. Such engagements make the boys less likely to be in school than the girls.

The result also suggests that availability of school is an impetus that encourages school attendance by children in rural areas. According to Amao *et al* (2010), as a result of school inaccessibility or the lack of quality education, parents put their children into child labour and other profitable pursuits.

Table 5: Regression analysis for factors influencing children's schooling

Variables	β	t-value	p-value
Constant		8.902	0.000
Child's age	-0.237	-3.366	0.001
Child parent's education	-0.042	-0.540	0.590
Being a male child	-0.139	-2.062	0.040
Number of children in the house	-0.141	-1.850	0.066
Age of the parent	-0.106	-1.296	0.197
Parent's monthly income	-0.014	-0.210	0.834

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Monogamy marriage	-0.024	-0.313	0.754
Male household head	0.066	0.867	0.387
School availability in the area	0.198	1.968	0.050
School distance from residence	-0.163	-1.668	0.097

CONCLUSION

Children education is deemed important to promote the socioeconomic development of communities, even in rural areas. Children in rural areas of the study area were mostly enrolled in schools. However, they were burdened with other activities that may limit their attainments from the educational engagements. The educational engagement of children in rural areas is being constrained by attitude of their parents but aided by availability of school facilities. The parents' attitude may have been influenced by some variables like their education, monthly income, age among others that do not significantly influence children schooling.

Recommendations

Based on the outcome of the study, it is recommended that;

1. Development stakeholders should consciously target the rural parents for enlightenment on why their children must be educated.
2. The campaign should be for optimal children education, which should be devoid of other activities that may hinder the children's educational gains, like apprenticeship and working while schooling.
3. The campaign for children education should emphasise all children (male and female) of school age.
4. The government should consider giving incentives to parents in rural areas who granted optimal allowance for their children's educational engagements.
5. The government and corporate entities should establish and provide adequate facilities to schools in rural areas.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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Ethical approval

This article does not contain any studies with human participants performed by any of the authors.

Data and materials availability:

All data associated with this study are present in the paper.

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